

Whereas my birth and spirit rather took
The way that takes the Town;
Thou didst betray me to a lingring Book,
And wrap me in a gown.

In two sonnets as early as 1610 he had dedicated all his verse henceforth to God. But his life proved a harder thing to give. Even when his earthly hopes had sunk into the grave of King James, he drew back as unwillingly as Donne from that religious vocation which he was one day to fulfil so fervently. Yet again, just as his Church has never cared to push asceticism to the point of celibacy, so Herbert, on the very eve of ordination, wedded a lady whom he had only seen three days earlier, and who had herself fallen in love with him not at, but before, first sight. And lastly, when Herbert's life flickered out at Bemerton in 1633, that curious mind of his may, one imagines, have dwelt with a momentary sense of consoling appropriateness on the thought that his course had closed, like his Master's, with a three years' ministry; and that, like God's people, he was entering the Promised Land after just forty years in this world's wilderness.

But what was the real man behind this bare outline? Walton reveals little—Mr. Herbert was holy; he endured bad health; he loved music; he took off his coat and helped a poor man whose 'poorer horse*' had fallen on the road to Salisbury, Herbert's few extant letters are dull, and tasteless in both senses of the word. It is his poems and

the one good portrait that tell us most.
They give the
impression of a fragile, sensitive, fastidious
personality.
Cover up the eyes and the long, refined
nose in the
drawing—that mouth, repressed and
tightened now,
might have been sensual once. It has
watered for the apple
of this world, and tasted it, unsatisfied, and a
wrinkle of dis-
taste recalls it still. There is distrust in those
suffering eyes.